

The Nature of Wood

Unit Overview

By Mary Erickson, Ph.D.

The Nature of Wood is a three-lesson unit plan designed in conjunction with the Biennial: Wood exhibition at the Gallery at Tempe Center for the Arts.

[Biennial: Wood Exhibition Preview PowerPoint](#)

Themes

- *Theme in Life:* Ultimately, everything we eat, wear and use in our daily lives was made from natural materials.
- *Theme in Art:* Artists who work with natural materials, like wood, can help us experience the rich variety and unique qualities of materials we might otherwise take for granted.

Key Questions

Lessons approach the themes through three key questions.



1. What visual elements (color, form, texture, etc.) do artists consider when they select art materials from nature?
2. How can small parts be assembled to create a larger whole?



3. Where do art materials come from? (natural environment)

Community Connections

In the natural forests of the low deserts of Arizona are hardy smallish trees, like mesquite, palo verde and desert willow. While in the forests in the high country other trees, such as pinion pine, oaks and majestic ponderosa pine, are more common. Often we can spot a river by the cottonwoods growing along its banks. In addition to indigenous trees there are non-native species such as olive trees and eucalyptus. Some plants, we commonly call trees, like palms and Joshua trees, are not trees at all. We plant trees in our neighborhoods to provide shade and to give our lives a touch of nature.

Lessons

[One: Everything Comes from Nature \(pdf\)](#)

[Two: Exploring the Wonders of Wood at the Tempe Center for the Arts \(pdf\)](#)

[Three: Assembly in Wood \(pdf\)](#)

Credits

Roger Asay and Rebecca Davis

Shirley Wagner

Martin Moreno

Roy Erickson for thoughtful editing

Lena Hubin and Linda Crain for photographs

Supplies

dried small sticks and twigs
white glue
newspaper to cover tables

OPTIONAL: corrugated cardboard (scissors or paper cutter)
popsicle sticks, toothpicks, applicator sticks, mini popsicle sticks

OPTIONAL FOR ADVANCED CONSTRUCTION: Paper cups, small boxes or other forms over which constructions can be assembled

Estimated Time

Previsit Lesson = 20-50 minutes
TCA Visit Lesson = Field Trip
Postvisit Lesson = 40-80 minutes for 2D: 120-240 minutes for 3D

Resources

[Biennial: Wood Exhibition Preview PowerPoint](#)
[Everything Comes from Nature PowerPoint](#)
[Exploring the Wonders of Wood at the Tempe Center for the Arts \(pdf\)](#)
[Assembly in Wood PowerPoint](#)
[More Assembly in Wood PowerPoint \(Advanced options\)](#)
[Questor Questions about Assembled Wood Artworks \(pdf\)](#)